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OWNER OF LIMOUSINE COMPANY SENTENCED TO JAIL

Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit

Successfully Prosecutes Man for Credit Card Fraud

San Diego, CA (November 17, 1998) -- The owner of a now-closed limousine company, who was convicted of defrauding his customers and credit card processing companies, is going to jail. Joseph Perez, who owned Ambassador Limousine Service in San Diego, was placed on five years of probation today by San Diego Municipal Court Judge Charles R. Gill. As a condition of probation, Perez was ordered to serve 360 days in jail and to pay restitution to the victims. Perez was sentenced after pleading no contest to five counts of grand theft last month.

The San Diego City Attorney's Office filed the charges against Perez in July 1998 following an investigation by the California Public Utilities Commission. The investigation found that Ambassador Limousine added a "0" to the limousine charge after customers signed credit card slips for limousine rentals. One customer was charged \$3,000 when he signed a credit card slip for only \$300. Customers discovered the overcharge when they received their credit card statements. Perez defrauded at least twelve known victims and credit card processing companies of more than \$57,000.

This case was prosecuted by the City Attorney's Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit. "This case is a reminder that consumers should carefully check their credit card statements, especially during this holiday season," City Attorney Casey Gwinn said. Any questionable credit card charges should be reported to the credit card issuing bank.

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